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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4181
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0023

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 000372

SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA GABRIELA ZAMBRANO, AND EUR/CE JAMIE
LAMORE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2019

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [HU](#)

SUBJECT: HUNGARY: COUNTRY REVIEW ON RELATIONS WITH CUBA

REF: SECSTATE 48487

Classified By: Acting Pol/Econ Counselor:Steve Weston,
reasons 1.4 (b and d)

1. (C) PolOff met with MFA America's Department Deputy Director Norbert Konkoly on May 15 to discuss ref A. Post views Hungary as a strong supporter of democracy and human rights in Cuba. Although the GoH has joined the EU consensus on lifting the embargo, they view the U.S. approach as appropriate and consistent with their goal of offering expertise and experience to nations seeking to make the transition to a democratic government. Their diplomatic mission in Havana actively engages the dissident community and frequently meets with prominent opposition leaders. Parliamentary parties widely support the Cuba policy and work actively to further their "principled approach" within the EU. At the USG's request, the GoH received 28 Cuban refugees from Guantanamo in 2007.

2. (C) Konkoly provided the following information in response to ref A questions:

Public statements or resolutions: Officials from all of the Parliamentary parties have made public statements in support of human rights and democracy in Cuba. During an event organized by the International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT) to mark the 2008 "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People," several officials organized a press conference to publicly call on Cuba to release all political prisoners and establish democratic institutions in the country.

Diplomatic mission's actions in support of civil society: Despite a staff of only two officers, the Hungarian Embassy in Havana actively and effectively engages the dissident community and conducts a robust public outreach campaign to promote a peaceful democratic transition. They have an ongoing program to distribute laptops, pen drives, books, and other publications to penetrate the information blockade on the island. They recently hosted a film week featuring movies that depict Hungary's democratic values. In 2007, Cuba withdrew its Ambassador to Hungary in order to make clear its displeasure with the GoH's democratization efforts on the island.

High-level diplomatic visits in past six months: There have been no high-level visits, nor has there been any high-level bilateral dialogue, during the past six months.

Nature of investments: Konkoly described Hungary's investment relations with Cuba as "basically non-existent." He reported that Hungarian exports to Cuba total approximately USD 3 million per year while Cuban imports equal roughly USD 157,000. There is a joint economic committee but it has not met in recent memory.

Bilateral trade agreements: Konkoly reported that Hungary and Cuba have two bilateral trade agreements, but noted that neither has been effectively enforced. The Economic and Trade Cooperation Agreement of 1997 established the protocol for creating an Economic Joint Committee. Despite the agreement, the Joint Committee was never established. The Economic Cooperation Agreement of 2006 established guidelines for the Cuban government to repay a 262 million ruble debt to the GoH which the Cuban government remains reluctant to pay back. There are no other trade agreements in place between the GoH and Cuba.

Exchange programs: There are no exchange programs in place between the GoH and Cuba. However, Hungary's ICDT has plans to conduct "democratization training" aimed at strengthening the civil society in rural Cuba. If funded, this program would employ a "training of trainers" approach to broaden the impact of their efforts. Hungary does not participate in any of the exchange programs mentioned in reftel, including any medical exchange programs. Konkoly described cultural ties between the GoH and Cuba as "inactive."

Levine